

Monte Cristo Outdone

Ordinary Career of
Lebaudy, Recently Killed by
Almost Incredible
as Real Personage Which
Eclipse the Imagination
of the Great Novelist

in
Real
Life

It happens that she now comes seeking his rescue and announces that he is a Frenchman?"

Surveying the contradictory facts the astute police chief reasoned thus:

Here is a stranger masquerading in Moorish costume. By the vigilance of the police this masquerader is discovered and announces himself the emperor of an empire which does not exist. Then comes a native slave girl and declares her master is a Frenchman. And yet the prisoner is undoubtedly the same as the picture of the missing bank cashier. Evidently the police had an important and resourceful criminal to deal with. The chief would redouble his precautions to make sure that his prisoner, and the reward, should not slip through his fingers. No, the slave girl should not be allowed to interview her master in spite of her pleadings and gold.

But Amneh was not to be discouraged. Lebaudy had been the only ray of kindness and generosity which had ever entered her poor life. He must be rescued. Here was a rich and chivalrous man who had gotten into difficulty on an errand of mercy for her—Amneh would save him if it cost her her life.

Setting out for the nearest city where an Austrian Consul could be found, Amneh decided that she might be able to enlist his help if she could prove that the Turkish police held in their clutches Jacques Lebaudy instead of Franz Gebhart, the absconder. No French Consul was to be found in the neighborhood, but the Austrian Consul would do if he could be reached.

After some travelling Amneh found an Austrian official of considerable intelligence. Indeed, it turned out that he had heard of the exploits of Lebaudy in his comic-opera effort to establish the Empire of Sahara. He was rather interested. Was it possible that the real Lebaudy of whom he had read was at this moment in a Turkish dungeon in the Consul's own territory? He would find out.

Communicating with Vienna he discovered that the embezzler, Gebhart, had been arrested. Clearly then the prisoner in the dungeon in Scutari was not the Vienna absconder. Whether he was Lebaudy or not the Consul was not sure. It was sufficient that he was not the absconder, Gebhart.

It was a great piece of luck, as Amneh realized, to find that the Vienna absconder had been caught. But would the disappointed Turkish police of Scutari take her word for it? And here the bag of gold which Amneh had secreted under her Turkish trouserettes proved of great importance, because, by the magic of its click, the Austrian Consul was persuaded that perhaps it was his duty to accompany the beautiful Amneh back to Scutari and take Lebaudy into his own custody.

With body emaciated and nerves unstrung by his sufferings in prison and lack of food, Lebaudy was rescued and returned with Amneh to Dulcigno to rest and regain his health and strength. He was in no condition to push the plan of rescue of poor sister Zobeide at that moment. His experience of ten days in the vile dungeon of old Scutari filled him with disgust.

It was while Lebaudy was regaining his health and spirits in Dulcigno that he met an American traveller who was searching for oil deposits. He became much interested in Lebaudy's various experiences and finally told the Emperor that he could suggest a scheme which was quicker, much cheaper and more certain to accomplish his ambitions than Lebaudy's present plan to buy up a little principality.

This American had had "practical" experience in New York politics. He explained to Lebaudy how easy and how cheap it was to buy a majority in a voting district. Having made this aspect of practical politics very clear, he then told Lebaudy that he should abandon his plan of purchasing a small sovereignty, and find some small republic where he could, with his millions, purchase the presidency. This was, of course, a sordid proposition, but, like Napoleon, Lebaudy felt that his aims justified the means.

It seems that in the course of his travels and explorations for possible new oil fields this man had visited the curious republic of San Marino in the northern part of Italy. This is not only the smallest but the oldest republic

in the world, and was founded four hundred years after Christ. Lebaudy already knew a little about San Marino and recalled that Napoleon had recognized the latter republic as being on equal terms with the other and greater nations of the earth. And Lebaudy had drunk the famous wine of this republic and his heart rather warmed to the idea of the possibility of establishing himself as president of San Marino.

Furthermore, it seemed such an economical thing to accomplish. With a population of only ten or eleven thousand inhabitants there must be considerably less than three thousand voters. Fifteen hundred votes would certainly be a majority. If he paid as high as a thousand dollars a vote it would cost him only a million and a half dollars to be elected president of the oldest republic on earth.

The scheme seemed very attractive. Already Lebaudy had spent more than that amount of money buying up real estate in Dulcigno. If he had invested this sum in practical politics in San Marino he might already be the duly elected head of a little nation of perfectly good standing.

There were many things about the little republic of San Marino which appealed to Lebaudy's imagination—and many things which he already began to think about changing for the better. At present it had a national army of only nine regular troopers. Lebaudy would very much augment this force and cheerfully pay the bill himself. The army possessed only two field pieces. This Lebaudy would remedy by providing a considerable battery of modern guns.

The present political scheme of electing a committee of sixty to govern the republic Lebaudy regarded as antiquated and cumbersome. How much better to dispense with this unwieldy committee and adopt the more modern and progressive scheme of a president and cabinet. All this Lebaudy would attend to.

Lebaudy had natural artistic tastes and the beautiful and picturesque always appealed to him. He was much interested to know that the thirty-eight square miles which comprised the republic were a panorama of unsurpassed splendor—mountains and peaks, sea and plain. Nowhere in the world is the architecture of the towns, the buildings and the churches more picturesque.

A little inquiry satisfied Lebaudy that the international relations between San Marino and the rest of the world were very satisfactory. He was told that the little republic maintained a legation at Paris and had consuls in many other European cities. Furthermore, he learned that there were treaties between such great Powers as England, France and the United States and this little republic. Thus he became fully satisfied that any official acts of his as president of San Marino would be recognized the world over.

But in the back of his head was an idea which added

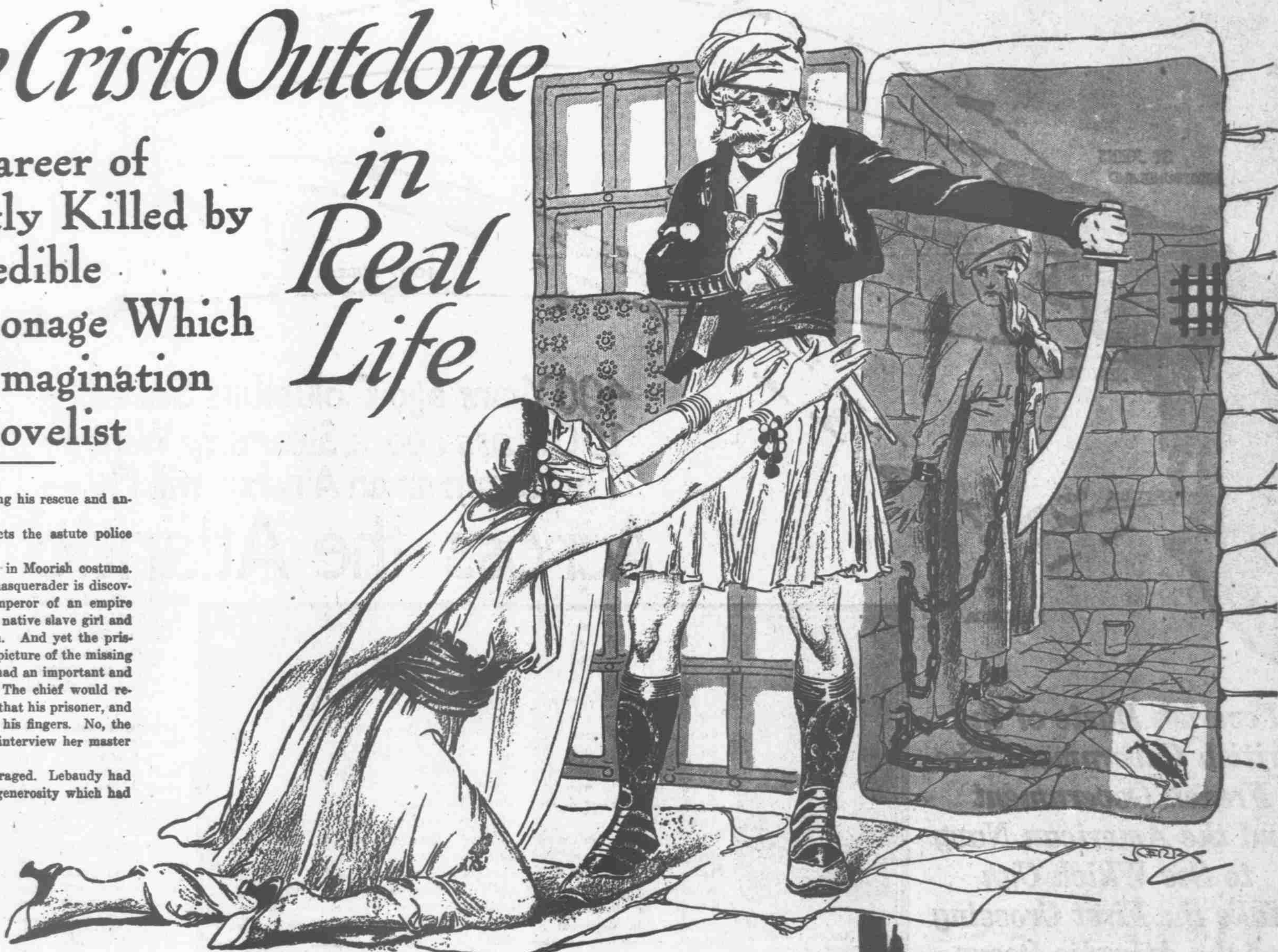
special charm to the prospects which he felt San Marino offered. Perhaps what this little republic really needed was a wise and generous monarch. So far as he could learn the little republic was a thousand years behind the times in its development. Was this not due to its old-fashioned methods of government? If he could have himself elected president of the republic it might be an easy step to have himself crowned as Jacques I., King of San Marino. Republics were not ungrateful. Did not George Washington have a good deal of difficulty in persuading his admiring countrymen not to crown him King of the United States? Washington showed poor judgment in declining this honor; Lebaudy would make no such mistake.

Thus with this new scheme buzzing in his busy brain Lebaudy began to forget the horrible nightmare of his ten days of misery and starvation in the Scutari dungeon. But his nerves had received a considerable shock, and his recovery was slow.

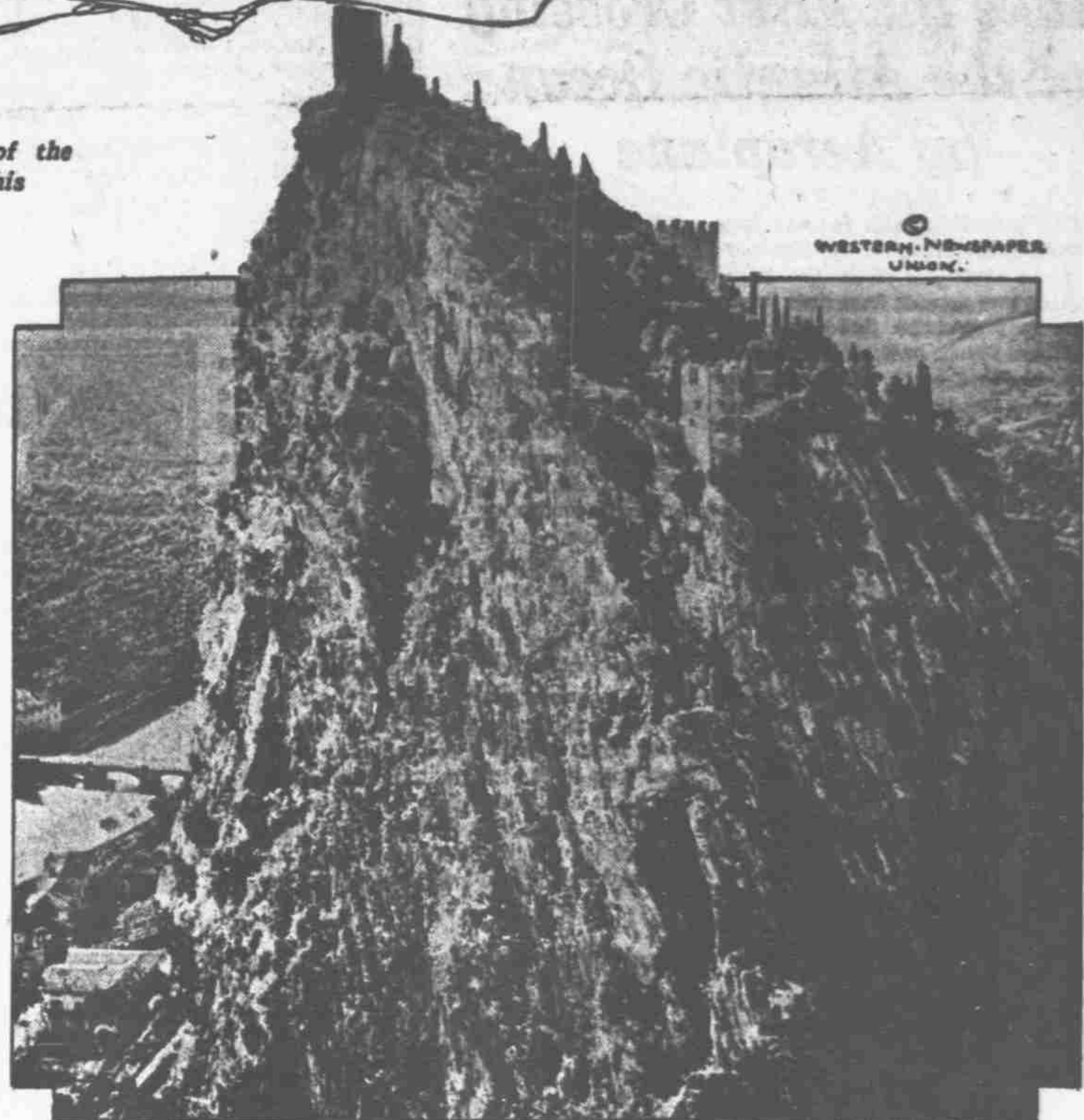
Before he had fully recovered things began happening in France which seemed to make his return to that country absolutely necessary to defend the suits which the five captured sailors had begun against him and because of the threats of the French authorities to confiscate his property for evasion of military service and non-payment of taxes.

A great consolidation of sugar interests, in which Lebaudy's fortune was largely invested, was pending, and if he was to reap some millions of dollars' profit from it he must go to Paris and personally attend to the final details.

His mother was also continually urging him to come home. She had been greatly worried over the wild escapades of her son, Max, and also over the way she had become innocently involved in the affairs of Madame



"The pleadings of Lebaudy's slave-girl served to still further arouse the suspicions of the Turkish prison officials, and she was not allowed to talk with the Emperor in his dungeon, in spite of her impassioned appeal and her bag of gold."



A precipitous mountain peak, with castles and towers, in the picturesque little republic of San Marino.

Humbert, one of the most audacious swindlers the world has ever seen.

There was still another reason why Lebaudy felt that he must return to Paris. Two of his agents to whom he had intrusted the management of some of his enterprises after he began to occupy himself with imperial plans were behaving very badly. For months they had failed to make a satisfactory accounting of moneys received and Lebaudy had good reason to believe that they were systematically robbing him.

Things at last reached a point where he saw that unless he wished to lose a large part of his property he must go back to Paris. His trip to San Marino would have to be postponed until he could set things right in France.

He sent telegrams to his attorneys instructing them to spare no expense in their efforts to have the French Government deal leniently with him. As soon as he received assurances that he would probably not be promptly thrown into prison as a deserter and tax dodger he installed Amneh in a magnificent villa just outside Dulcigno and set out with his personal suite for Paris.

(Continued Next Sunday)